

# A HOLY BAT

## Methodist, Baptist, & Among Shawnee

*by Kevin Abing*



*Methodist missionary Thomas Johnson*

**I**n October 1834 the Shawnee Indians held a full tribal council on their reserve in present-day eastern Kansas. After much deliberation, the gathering demanded that government officials remove all Methodist and Baptist missionaries working among the tribe. The reasons for the council's decision were not defined, but many members undoubtedly resented the missionaries' attempts to convert them to Christianity. No less disturbing, however, was the incessant squabbling between the Methodists and Baptists.

The cultural struggle between Native Americans and Christian missionaries is a story that frequently has been told. Less known is the interdenominational strife that all too often character-

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*Kevin Abing earned his Ph.D. from Marquette University in 1995. His dissertation was a study of the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School. He is currently employed as an archival assistant with the Marquette University Archives.*

# TLEGROUND

## Quaker Missionaries Indians, 1830–1844

ized missionary endeavors in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> This seems particularly true with regard to missions in preterritorial Kansas. The area was ripe for religious competition. The federal government's removal policy forced numerous eastern tribes to settle on fixed reserves in what is now Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Kansas. Missionaries from several Protestant denominations, as well as the

1. For works that discuss denominational rivalries, see William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789–1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 165–67, 170–74; Clara Sue Kidwell, "Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi Before 1830," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 11 (1987): 65–69; Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818–1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 75–76, 96–97, 118–24; Michael E. Stevens, "Catholic and Protestant Missionaries Among Wisconsin Indians: The Territorial Period," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58 (Winter 1974–1975): 141, 144–48; William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People, 1673–1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 122–37; Robert Lee Whitner, "The Methodist Episcopal Church and Grant's Peace Policy: A Study of the Methodist Agencies, 1870–1882" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1959), 118–54; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888–1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).



*Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy*

Roman Catholic Church, ventured west to save “heathen” Indians from eternal damnation. Given the restricted space, perhaps it was inevitable that bad blood developed among the competing missionaries. The historical literature pertaining to Kansas missions, however, ignores or treats these rivalries in only a cursory fashion.<sup>2</sup>

The contest among the Shawnees from 1830 to 1844 was particularly acute. From the beginning Baptist and Methodist missionaries sparred with one another for Shawnee souls. The situation was further muddled when the Society of Friends (Quakers) dispatched missionaries to work among the Shawnees. Despite many differences, all of these groups shared a fundamental belief: white, Christian society was superior to Native American culture. Indeed, this principle fomented cooperative, and even friendly, activities among members of the various sects. The Baptists, for example, used their printing press to supply books for the other denominations. And, isolated from “civilized” society, missionaries of all three denominations often visited one another and sometimes conducted joint services.<sup>3</sup>

These niceties notwithstanding, suspicion tainted much of the interaction among these men and women of God. Although the Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers ostensibly worked toward the same goal of civilizing the Indians, each denomination believed that its particular brand of Christianity was the purest and surest route to salvation.

2. For an annotated list of works on the various tribes and missions within Kansas, see Homer E. Socolofsky and Virgil W. Dean, comps., *Kansas History: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 11–35; William E. Unrau, *The Emigrant Indians of Kansas: A Critical Bibliography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 31–36.

3. Mark Stephen Joy, “‘Into the Wilderness’: Protestant Missions Among the Emigrant Indians of Kansas, 1830–1854” (Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, 1992), 334–37; Elizabeth Brooks, *History of Mission and Northeast Johnson County* (Mission, Kans.: Historical Old Mission Enthusiasts, 1989), 12; Flora Harvey Kittle and Anna Steward Pearson, *Shawnee Indians in Kansas* (Kansas City, Kans.: n.p., 1917), 28–29, 31; H. Pearl Dixon, *Sixty Years Among the Indians: A Short Life Sketch of Thomas H. and Mary W. Stanley, Quaker Missionaries to the Indians* (n.p., [1922]), 30; Isaac McCoy to Herman Lincoln, May 11, 1842, Letters Received, 1824–1881, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, M234, roll 784, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Letters Received); Sara Ann to Daniel or Emily Huff, February 12, 1847, Huff Family Papers, Lily Library, Earlham College, Richmond, Ind.

The Methodists and Baptists were two of the country’s fastest-growing religions in the early nineteenth century. Their organizational structures differed, but each promoted the rapid spread of its respective denomination, especially among white settlers on the frontier. Methodist bishops directed the spiritual and business affairs of their delegated areas, but to spread the gospel, Methodists used itinerant ministers, known as circuit riders, to preach to and conduct services for far-flung Methodist classes. The Baptists utilized a congregational structure. Each congregation was an autonomous entity; thus, local units elected their own preachers. Although their flexible structures made it easy to reach isolated areas, some of the Baptists’ and Methodists’ successes undoubtedly lay in the fact that most ministers/preachers closely identified with their flocks because they too were struggling to scratch out an existence on the frontier.

The Baptists and Methodists also struggled with one another to win white converts. Theological differences provided the focus of this rivalry. The Methodists stressed that all people were sinful, but everyone had the capacity to redeem themselves and obtain salvation. Through faith and God’s saving grace, individuals could be justified and even obtain a state of perfection. The Baptists, on the other hand, were more Calvinistic. They believed that the true church was made up only of true believers. Individuals could not be baptized into the church until they accepted and publicly testified to God’s grace. Consequently, Baptists rejected infant baptism, which the Methodists and other denominations practiced.<sup>4</sup> Although much of the Methodists’ and Baptists’ time was spent preaching to white Americans, their evangelicalism dictated that they also carry God’s word to nonwhite people. As a result, missionaries began preaching abroad and at home to various Indian tribes.

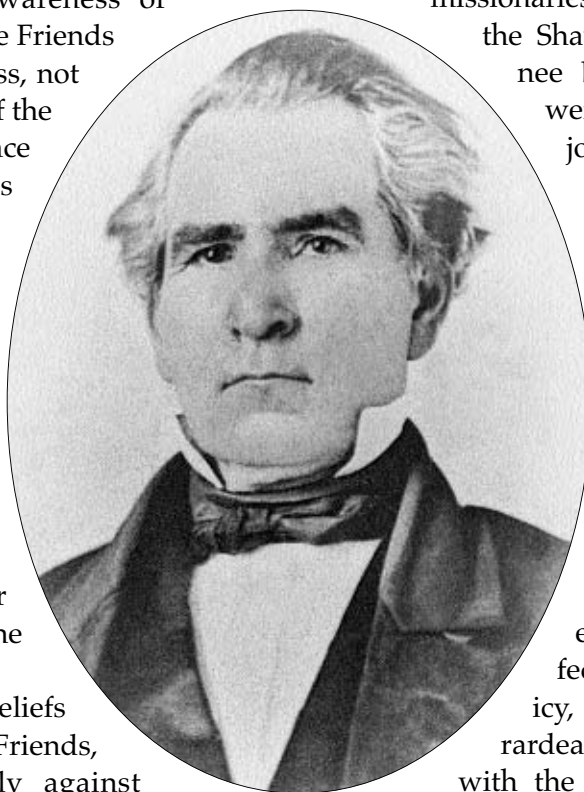
4. Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1974), 46–50, 156–63; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783–1830* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), 43–44; William Henry Brackney, *The Baptists* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 23–70.

The Society of Friends espoused a much different set of beliefs than the other two faiths. The Friends' most distinctive doctrine was the concept of the Inner Light, identified as God's voice within each individual. Following the Light enabled believers to achieve salvation, thereby rendering unnecessary other intermediaries, such as sacraments or priests. For example, the Friends rejected water baptisms, asserting that true baptism was the awareness of Christ's spirit within oneself. The Friends sought a gradual path to holiness, not the single "rebirth" experience of the Methodists or Baptists. To advance the work of salvation, Friends sought solitude from the world's distractions. They adopted a set of tenets, which they called the plain life, and their worship meetings generally consisted of quiet contemplation. Egalitarianism was an integral component of the Quakers' theology. They stressed that everyone shared in the Inner Light. As a result, Friends freely spread their "truths" to others, including the Shawnees.<sup>5</sup>

Because of the contrasting beliefs of the Methodists, Baptists, and Friends, these groups battled not only against Shawnee "heathenism" but against one another. The interdenominational rivalry, however, was based on more than theological disputes. Underlying reasons for the friction were as basic as conflicting personalities and petty jealousies, but more complex elements also were involved. Collectively, these regarded differing methodological approaches, which all three denominations employed to solve

what was commonly referred to as the Indian "problem."<sup>6</sup>

The results of this sectarian strife contributed little to the Shawnees' welfare. The tribe faced drastic cultural challenges, which invariably bred disharmony between those who assimilated to American culture and those who retained their traditional heritage. The arrival of the Methodist, Baptist, and Quaker missionaries added a religious dimension to the Shawnees' cultural struggle. Shawnee bands and individual families were torn apart, as members either joined one of the Christian faiths or adhered to their traditional religion. The interdenominational feuding only added to the con-



*Baptist missionary Johnston Lykins*

fusion, with the Indians attempting to make sense of this Christian onslaught.

The scene of this struggle was the rolling grasslands of eastern Kansas. As part of the federal government's removal policy, a Shawnee band from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, concluded a treaty with the United States in 1825 and exchanged its lands for a tract that stretched westward from the Missouri state line and hugged the southern bank of the Kansas River. The Shawnees began migrating to their new home during the winter of 1825–1826 and eventually converged in the northeast corner of the reserve, in present-day Wyandotte County. The treaty also stipulated that the Shawnee bands in Ohio could claim lands in the newly created reserve. As American demands for Shawnee land in Ohio escalated, tribal members emigrated beyond the Mississippi River in a piecemeal fashion. Roughly one-third had left Ohio by 1828. In 1831 the remain-

5. Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1–11; Clyde A. Milner II, *With Good Intentions: Quaker Work Among the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas in the 1870s* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 7–10; Gary N. Damron, "The Friends Missionary Establishment Among the Shawnee Indians in Kansas" (master's thesis, Wichita State University, 1985), 1–11.

6. Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 300, 312–30, 338–39.

ing Shawnees ceded their Ohio lands to the United States. The Wapaughkonetta band journeyed west in 1832, and the Hog Creek band followed in 1833.<sup>7</sup>

By the time the Ohio bands arrived, the Methodists and Baptists had already launched their missionary enterprises. In July 1830 Fish, principal chief of a Missouri band, and William Jackson, another prominent tribesman, asked Indian Agent George Vashon to make arrangements for establishing a mission and school to educate their children. Both Fish and Jackson were white men who had lived with the Shawnees since childhood and as such were more amenable to white culture. Vashon eventually turned

*Baptist missionary Jotham Meeker*

to the Methodist Episcopal Church. He informed Reverend Jessie Greene, presiding elder of the Missouri Conference, of the Shawnees' request and further stated that "no other situation in the country possesses as many advantages. I therefore recommend it, in the strongest possible light, as the most judicious location that can be selected."<sup>8</sup>

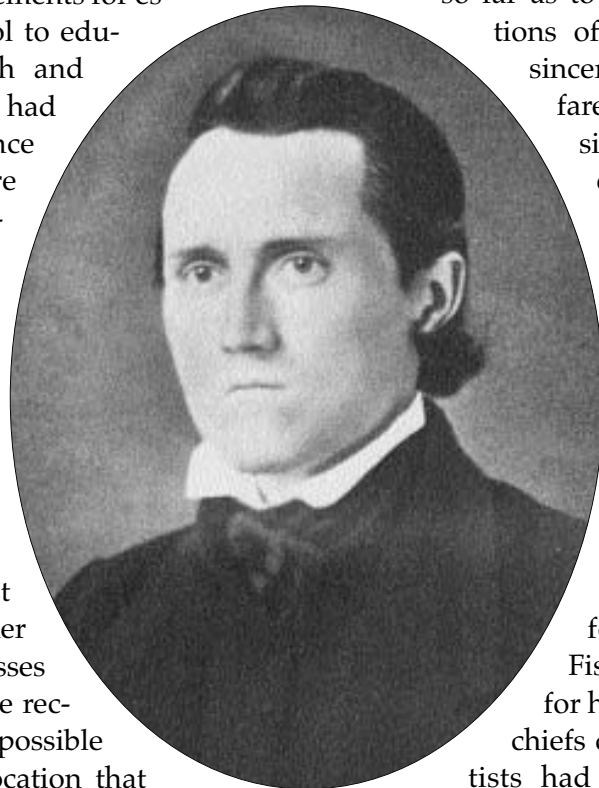
Before the Methodists took any action, however, Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy passed through the Shawnee reserve in late August on a surveying expedition. McCoy was one of the most well known mis-

sionaries at that time. He had worked for years among several tribes in the Great Lakes region, but he gained notoriety for his staunch defense of Andrew Jackson's Indian removal program. McCoy was a fiercely devout individual with an expansive ambition. He promoted Indian removal as the first step in the creation of a separate Indian state; he alone wanted to be the architect of this creation and even went

so far as to secure contracts to survey portions of Indian Territory. Although he sincerely worked for the Indians' welfare, McCoy's ambition and aggressive character often impeded his efforts by causing friction between fellow missionaries and government agents.<sup>9</sup>

On this expedition, McCoy, at the behest of Subagent John Campbell, met with twenty of the Shawnees' leading men and explained the advantages of having a mission among them. After the gathering dispersed, McCoy spoke with Fish, who reiterated his desire for a mission. McCoy assured Fish that one would be provided for his band no matter what the other chiefs decided. Confident that the Baptists had gained a toehold among the Shawnees, McCoy continued on his way.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after he left, the Methodists launched their missionary efforts. The Missouri Conference met in St. Louis on September 16, 1830, organized a missionary society, and appointed Thomas Johnson missionary to the Shawnees. Johnson, every bit as ambitious as McCoy, dominated Methodist missionary activity among the Shawnees for nearly the next



7. Grant W. Harrington, *The Shawnees in Kansas* (Kansas City, Kans.: Western Pioneer Press, 1937), 3–6; Charles J. Kappler, comp., *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, vol. II: *Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 262–64, 331–34; Grant Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 54, 72–85.

8. George Vashon to Jessie Greene, July 1830, quoted in J.J. Lutz, "The Methodist Missions Among the Indian Tribes in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections* 1905–1906 9 (1906): 165–67; Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes; Their Settlement Within the Indian Territory, and Their Future Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: William M. Morrison, 1840), 404–5.

9. The standard biography of McCoy is George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972).

10. Lela Barnes, "Journal of Isaac McCoy for the Exploring Expedition of 1830," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 5 (November 1936): 342–43; McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 404–5.

three decades. He seemed particularly suited for the rugged life of a frontier missionary. The young Virginia native was a large, robust individual with a "portly commanding presence, a penetrating eye and full and pleasant voice." Associates commented favorably upon his administrative abilities, describing him as a man with "good, strong, practical common sense; a good judge of human nature, and quick to take the situation in every emergency."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Johnson already had experienced the rigors of frontier life, ministering to fellow frontiersmen in Arkansas and Missouri for the previous four years. The newly appointed missionary and Reverend Alexander McAlister traveled to the Shawnee reserve late in the fall of 1830 and broached the subject of a mission to the tribe.<sup>12</sup>

When McCoy returned in November, Chiefs Cornstalk and William Perry informed him that they were amenable to a Baptist mission. He was disappointed to learn, however, that Fish's band had accepted the Methodists' proposition. McCoy believed that the chiefs who accepted his offer did so more "through courtesy, than on account of a desire really to enjoy the advantages of education. Like most Indians, not much advanced in civilization, they felt little desire for schools, and still less to hear preaching." But McCoy believed the Fish band "appreciated in a good degree the former, and were favorably inclined to the latter, and through them [he] had hoped that access could be successfully obtained to the main body of the nation." Even though the Baptists secured access to the Shawnees, McCoy felt a disappointment he "could not remedy." His frustration stemmed, in part, from his inability to minister to the more amenable Fish band. But his pride also must

have been sorely wounded, for McCoy undoubtedly hoped to monopolize the Shawnee mission field.<sup>13</sup>

The Methodists wasted little time getting their enterprise underway. In December 1830 Thomas Johnson and his wife commenced building a mission on a wooded bluff along the Kansas River, near present-day Turner, Kansas. Johnson completed the two-story log schoolhouse the following spring, and the small boarding school began operating in May. Johnson's efforts had a promising start. When he left in the summer for the Missouri Annual Conference, the school was in a "flourishing" condition. Moreover, Johnson had made significant gains among the tribe's leading men. After listening to one of Johnson's sermons, a Shawnee delegation reportedly told other members that "the preacher knew just what they did, only better." As a result, a number of the more important chiefs threw their support to the Methodists.<sup>14</sup>

Two obstacles soon hampered the Methodists' efforts. During the summer of 1831 an outbreak of small pox forced them to suspend the school temporarily.<sup>15</sup> The second problem proved to be more enduring. In July Johnston Lykins, Isaac McCoy's son-in-law, arrived to establish the Baptists' mission to the Shawnees. Lykins apprised McCoy that the Methodists exhibited "some sensibility on the subject of our coming, but I hope it will settle down into good feeling."<sup>16</sup>

Evidence of any good feeling was rare for the competition for Shawnee souls was too intense. One of the most serious points of contention concerned the proper method of instruction. All missionaries in Indian Territory agreed that English was a superior form of communication. But not

11. William Stewart Woodard, *Annals of Methodism in Missouri* (Columbia, Mo.: E.W. Stephens, 1893), 62–63; Edith Connelley Ross, "The Old Shawnee Mission," *Kansas Historical Collections 1926–1928* 17 (1928): 422; Lutz, "The Methodist Missions Among the Indian Tribes in Kansas," 161, n. 6; Nathan Scarritt, "Reminiscences of the Methodist Shawnee Mission. And Religious Work Among That Tribe," *Annals of Kansas City* 1 (October 1924): 436.

12. Martha B. Caldwell, comp., *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1939), 8–10; Lutz, "The Methodist Missions Among the Indian Tribes in Kansas," 165.

13. McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 404; Barnes, "Journal of Isaac McCoy," 376–77.

14. Thomas Johnson to Corresponding Secretary, January 17, 1837, *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York), March 17, 1837; Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 10–12; Ross, "The Old Shawnee Mission," 421.

15. Thomas Johnson to the Corresponding Secretary, December 29, 1831, in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Methodists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 514–16; Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 13–15.

16. Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 13.

all believed that teaching in English alone was the best method to educate the Indians. During the 1830s the Baptists vigorously promoted instruction in the Indians' native tongue. Isaac McCoy argued that it was "difficult for Indian apathy to yield to the tedious labour of studying the English language in addition to the process of learning to read." After some time Indian students may be able to read with "tolerable utility," but all too often they had an imperfect understanding of English. Hence, the "exercise becomes insipid."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the Baptists embarked upon a program to instruct the Shawnees in their own language. As proof that the plan could work, McCoy pointed to the Cherokees and Choctaws. Both tribes, he asserted, had improved much more rapidly after native language books were introduced. Moreover, Baptist missionary Jotham Meeker had developed an orthography for the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in the Great Lakes region. The Baptists repeated the experiment among the Shawnees. Meeker relocated to Indian Territory in 1833, and by the following year he had developed a Shawnee orthography and had printed several books and a newspaper in the Shawnee language. Based upon Meeker's work, the Baptists developed a "new system" of education to instruct both Shawnee children and adults.<sup>18</sup>

The Methodists initially were skeptical about the Baptists' system, believing that teaching in the vernacular impeded the civilization process. But the "new system" became very popular among the Shawnees, probably because it eased the difficulty of learning a new language and facilitated the understanding of new, and often bewildering, ideas. Indeed, its popularity forced the Methodists to develop a syllabic plan of their own. This plan, however, was short-lived. On June 15, 1834, the Shawnees held a council at the Methodist mission and decided to adopt Meeker's writing method. The next day an undoubtedly chastened Thomas Johnson approached

Meeker about printing books for the Methodists using the Baptist orthography.<sup>19</sup>

This setback rankled the Methodists' for years afterward. As late as 1839 Ira Blanchard, a Baptist missionary, declared that "from the first" the Methodists "violently opposed" the use of the "new system." They even had made a recent attempt to exclude books from Methodist services, which used the Baptists' system. The Indians, however, told the Methodists that "if the books were shut out from [the Indians'] society [the Methodists] were too."<sup>20</sup>

The acrimony between the Baptists and Methodists also spilled over into the political realm. When Thomas Johnson first approached the Shawnees about establishing a mission, Subagent Campbell, a Baptist supporter, tried to prevent Johnson from doing so. Undaunted, Johnson ignored Campbell and began his missionary labors. Johnson, however, was not satisfied. He, like McCoy, hoped to dominate the missionary field. He wanted all opponents removed and thus embarked on a campaign to have Campbell dismissed, accusing him of insobriety and encouraging the Shawnees not to send their children to school. The Ohio Shawnee bands came to Campbell's defense. Chiefs John Perry and Cornstalk claimed that Johnson, in his attempts to control all missionary efforts, meddled in their affairs. Moreover, they believed Johnson cultivated too much of the Shawnees' land and cut down too much of their timber. Despite the Shawnee support, Agent Richard Cummins, a Methodist and Thomas Johnson's ally, believed Campbell was an ineffective official and dismissed him in July 1833.<sup>21</sup>

19. Jotham Meeker to Lucius Bolles, June 18, 1834, Jotham Meeker Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society; Grant, "Jotham Meeker," 46–48; Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 17–18.

20. Ira Blanchard to Lucius Bolles, April 10, 1839, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society–American Indian Correspondence, American Baptist Historical Society, Valley Forge, Penn. (hereafter cited as ABFMS).

21. John Perry et al. to William Clark, June 3, 1833, Letters Received, M234, roll 300; Stephen A. Warren, "The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees: Conflicting Cultures in Indian Territory, 1833–1834," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 17 (Autumn 1994): 153–55; Damron, "The Friends Missionary Establishment," 40–41.

17. McCoy to Major R.W. Cummins, 1838, Isaac McCoy Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

18. Ibid.; Joseph Pettie Grant, "Jotham Meeker: Orthographer, Pioneer Printer and Missionary" (Th.D. diss., Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1952), 23–30, 34–46.

The Shawnees' frustration with their feuding missionaries soon reached a boiling point. In March 1834 Jotham Meeker heard that the tribe had requested the secretary of war to expel all missionaries in its reserve. A tribal council repeated the request in October. Isaac McCoy believed that the Shawnees' anger stemmed not from any religious discord but from the problems between Thomas Johnson and the subagent. In addition, McCoy blamed "mischievous" white men for inflaming Shawnee discontent. To quell further trouble, McCoy contacted Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring and successfully argued that the missions were too valuable to suspend.<sup>22</sup>

Several months before McCoy contacted Herring, missionaries from both denominations instituted an annual interdenominational conference. This stemmed from the fear that future clashes might jeopardize their missionary endeavors. The first meeting was held at the Shawnee Baptist Mission on July 25–26, 1834. Any semblance of harmony faded quickly when a dispute arose over the manner in which members of one denomination should be accepted into another. An observer commented that the issue sparked a "spirited debate" during which "feelings were manifested that should have found no place at such a meeting." The meeting finally adjourned, apparently without an amicable settlement. Although

future conferences were less contentious, the acrimony continued.<sup>23</sup>

Yet another source of strife between the Baptists and Methodists focused upon the education of Native American children. This issue was of vital importance to both denominations, for each believed that properly "civilized" Indian children would be the foundation for an ever-growing Christian flock. Initially, the

two denominations employed differing approaches to accomplish this goal. The Methodists utilized boarding schools to transform Native American children. This type of institution, they believed, facilitated the civilization process by isolating the young from the "heathenish"



*Baptist missionary Ira Blanchard*

influences of their parents and allowing the missionaries to oversee every aspect of the children's intellectual and moral development. In addition, it promoted the instruction of the "manual arts" proper to each sex: the girls learned domestic skills patterned upon white, middle-class society—how to keep house, raise children, and be a good wife—while the boys learned farming, blacksmithing, and carpentry.

The Baptist Missionary Board in Boston refused to support boarding schools, charging that they were much too expensive to maintain. Moreover, board members believed that missionaries should tend only to spiritual matters; boarding schools necessarily involved missionaries in secular activities. Conse-

22. Entry for March 14, 1834, "Journal of Jotham Meeker, 1832–1865," 32, Meeker Collection; M.G. Clark to William Clark, October 7, 1834, Letters Received, M234, roll 300; McCoy to Elbert Herring, January 19, 1835, McCoy Collection; Herring to McCoy, February 18, 1835, *ibid.*; Warren, "The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees," 157–61; McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 482–83. Similarly, the Delawares became so disgusted with the Baptists' and Methodists' bickering that they sent a delegation to Washington, D.C., to ask that all white men be removed from their country. The missionaries prevented any such action by informing the Indian Department that only a few Indians, encouraged by unprincipled whites, were behind the measure. See Schultz, *An Indian Canaan*, 167–68.

23. Entries for July 25–26, 1834, May 15, 1835, and May 12, 1836, "Journal of Jotham Meeker," 39, 52, 71, Meeker Collection; Journal of John Dunbar, reprinted in "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee Country, Near Bellvue, Neb., 1831–1849," *Kansas Historical Collections* 1915–1918 14 (1918): 589–90; Schultz, *An Indian Canaan*, 168; Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 18.



quently, the Baptists relied upon Shawnee parents to send their children to a small day school.<sup>24</sup>

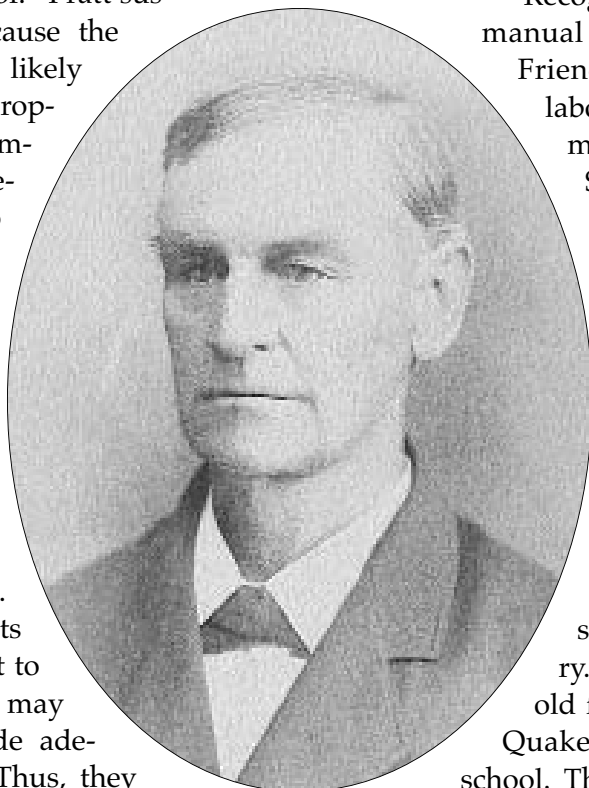
In this case the Methodists had the upper hand, for the Shawnees much preferred boarding schools to day schools. In 1838 Baptist missionary John G. Pratt contended that the Indians “would laugh at the idea of sending their children to school without their being furnished as they can attend other schools where they are thus provided for.” Pratt suspected that this occurred because the Shawnees could not, or more likely would not, raise their children properly. Several years later Pratt complained that Indian parents preferred sending their children to boarding schools “professedly

*Baptist missionary John G. Pratt*

for the purpose of obtaining for them an education, but really to rid themselves of the burden of maintaining them.”<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps Pratt was correct. Certainly some Shawnee parents struggled as they tried to adapt to their new surroundings and may have been too poor to provide adequate care for their children. Thus, they turned to the missionaries to supply needed food and clothing.<sup>26</sup> Cultural reasons also may have influenced the Shawnees’ preference. The concept of reciprocity was a deeply rooted tradition among the

Shawnees and other tribes. If a stranger conferred a favor upon someone, the recipient was duty-bound to respond in kind.<sup>27</sup> Given the extremely close bonds between Indian parents and their children, many Shawnees sincerely believed they were doing the missionaries a great favor by sending their children to a boarding school; thus, the parents expected something in return from the missionaries.<sup>28</sup>



Recognizing the tribe’s preference for manual labor schools, the Society of Friends also established a manual labor school, further complicating missionary relations among the Shawnees. As early as 1807 Quaker missionaries had worked among the Shawnee bands in Ohio. After these bands ceded their lands to the United States and prepared to move beyond the Mississippi, the Quakers promised the Shawnees that they would follow and renew the Lord’s work. They did so during the summer of 1833 when the Indiana Yearly Meeting sent a delegation to Indian Territory. The Shawnees welcomed their old friends and readily agreed to the Quakers’ proposition to establish a school. The Indiana, Ohio, and Baltimore

Yearly Meetings eventually approved the venture and supplied the necessary funding. In July 1837 Moses Pearson and Elias Newby attended a Shawnee council and related how the natives expressed full confidence in the Friends and their proposed school; so much so that the Shawnees concluded to inform

24. McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 489–90; “Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission,” 587–88.

25. John G. Pratt to Lucius Bolles, October 5, 1838, ABFMS; Pratt to Bolles, August 21, 1841, *ibid*.

26. This was the case at other Indian schools. See Francis LaFlesche, *The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe* (1900; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 132; Robert A. Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891–1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 113–14; Trennert, “Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878–1920,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (July 1982): 284–85; Brenda J. Child, “A Bitter Lesson: Native Americans and the Government Boarding School Experience, 1890–1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1993), 45–63.

27. Joab Spencer, “The Shawnee Indians: Their Customs, Traditions and Folk-Lore,” *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1907–1908 10 (1908): 390.

28. Thomas Johnson to Corresponding Secretary, February 27, 1837, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, April 28, 1837; Zeri Hough to Daniel Huff, February 12, 1845, Huff Family Papers. Most white settlers who came in contact with Native Americans counted the strong parent–child attachment among the Indians’ defects. See, for example, Francis Barker to E. Bright, November 19, 1853, ABFMS; “Report of Indian Manual Labor School,” Letters Received, M234, roll 301.

the Baptist and Methodist missionaries that they should move their missions elsewhere. Whether the council passed on this request is not clear, but the Quakers did open their new boarding school later that year. Similar to the Methodists, the Friends taught various academic subjects and manual arts to Shawnee children.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that initially the interaction between the Quakers and their missionary neighbors was not nearly as acrimonious as that which so obviously characterized Baptist–Methodist relations. Perhaps this was because the Quakers took a less aggressive approach to evangelizing the Shawnees. They did not actively proselytize; rather, they relied on schooling and the sheer force of the Friends’ lifestyle to civilize the Indians and direct them along the path of righteousness. Although the Quakers reported a few converts, they did not openly contend with the Baptists and Methodists for Indian souls.<sup>30</sup>

The keen competition for Shawnee students intensified in 1839 when the Methodists established the Shawnee Manual Labor School. As early as 1837 Thomas Johnson had become disenchanted with his small boarding school. He complained that the amount of effort and money expended there and at similar Methodist schools scattered among other tribes in Indian Territory was disproportionate to the students’ slow progress. The ever-ambitious Johnson hoped to overcome these difficulties by establishing a large manual labor school in the Shawnee reserve that would benefit the “several tribes of Indians within striking distance.”<sup>31</sup>

Johnson put his plan into motion. In May 1838 he journeyed to New York to secure the approval of the Methodist missionary board. Not only did the board sanction the plan, but its members also promised an

annual donation up to ten thousand dollars to sustain the proposed school. Johnson then traveled to Washington, D.C., to put forth his proposal to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Carey Harris. Harris heartily endorsed the plan and agreed to pay half of the school’s construction costs in addition to an annual subsidy of twenty-five hundred dollars. Harris also directed Indian Agent Richard Cummins to help Johnson choose a suitable location for the school and to gain the Indians’ assent for the scheme. Cummins and Johnson rode into the Shawnee reserve and chose a site along the Santa Fe Trail, about one-half mile west of the Missouri border and roughly six miles south of the Kansas River’s mouth. The location included everything Johnson needed for his school: rich prairie soil to raise foodstuffs; a timber grove to supply fuel and building materials; and several springs for an ample water supply. Moreover, the school’s position literally ensured that it would serve as a gateway into Indian Territory. Johnson and Cummins then approached the Shawnees. A council of chiefs and headmen consented to the school, allowing Johnson to use as much land and timber as he needed.<sup>32</sup>

Johnson’s plan required land on a scale unprecedented for any previous Indian school. The Shawnee Manual Labor School eventually occupied nearly two thousand acres. The number of buildings likewise exceeded those at any other school. Construction began in 1839 and initially included two large brick schoolhouses/dormitories, a farmer’s residence, four mechanic shops, and several other farm buildings. By 1845 another brick dormitory had been added as were other workshops and farm buildings. The school commenced operation on October 29, 1839, and soon became the showpiece for the Methodists’ and the federal government’s civilizing efforts.<sup>33</sup> The Methodists touted attendance figures, which swelled

29. Damron, “The Friends Missionary Establishment,” 42, 49–52; 1837 Meeting Minutes, 13–14, Society of Friends, Ohio Yearly Meeting Records, 1808–1991 (microfilm edition), Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

30. Joy, “‘Into the Wilderness,’” 137–40; Damron, “The Friends Missionary Establishment,” 51–53; Wilson Hobbs, “The Friends’ Establishment in Kansas Territory,” *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1903–1904 8 (1904): 260.

31. Walter N. Vernon, “Beginnings of Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School,” *Methodist History* 15 (April 1977): 197.

32. *Western Christian Advocate* (Cincinnati), June 15, 1838, 30; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Methodists*, 547–50; C.A. Harris to Thomas Johnson, June 20, 1838, Letters Sent, 1824–1881, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, M21, roll 24, National Archives; Harris to William Clark, June 20, 1838, Special Files, 1807–1904, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, M574, roll 63, *ibid.*; Richard Cummins to Harris, October 18, 1838, *ibid.*; Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 26–27.

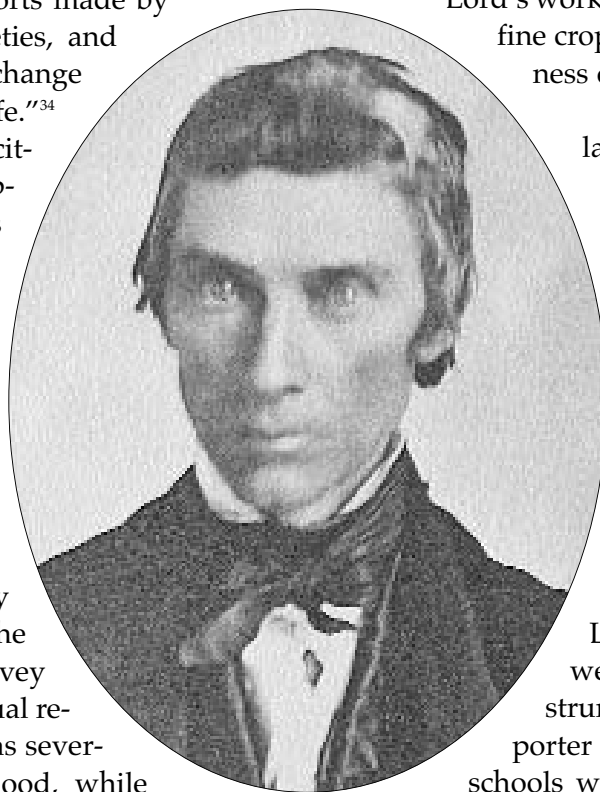
33. Caldwell, *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission*, 29–32.

to well over one hundred students. The Methodist missionary board continued to funnel supplies and money to the school, and government officials likewise lavished financial support and praise upon the institution. In his 1840 and 1841 annual reports, Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford singled out the Methodist school for “furnishing the strongest evidence . . . of the probability of success, after all our failures, in the efforts made by benevolent and religious societies, and by the Government, to work a change in Indian habits and modes of life.”<sup>34</sup>

The school’s popularity excited hard feelings among the Baptists and Quakers. Crawford’s 1841 annual report omitted

*Baptist missionary Robert Simerwell*

any reference to the Friends’ school, and Quaker missionary Henry Harvey quickly responded. He contacted Ohio Congressman Joseph Ridgeway and expressed his dismay at the commissioner’s oversight. Harvey hoped to discover why his annual report was “suppressed, as well as several others from this neighborhood, while that of the Methodist school [was] made the subject of much encomium.” Harvey wanted Ridgeway to remind the Indian department that the Friends had employed the manual labor plan years before the Methodist school commenced but “which through some kind of management has been kept out of view by the Commissioner in his great labor to hold up that of the Methodist.” If the Methodists, Quakers, and Baptists were all using the same plan of operation, Harvey asked, why was one school so highly



praised merely because it had more students than the others “when at the same time as much good [was] done by others in proportion to numbers and much more in proportion to the amount of funds received of the Government?” Johnston Lykins similarly complained about Crawford’s neglect of the Baptist school. He asserted that the smaller mission schools of the Baptists and Friends were truly engaged in the

Lord’s work. “Building fine houses & raising fine crops,” he wrote, was “not the business of missionaries.”<sup>35</sup>

The popularity of the manual labor school with government officials and Indian tribes sparked dissension within the Baptist ranks. Some Baptists, including John G. Pratt, Robert Simerwell, and Jotham Meeker, favored the continuation of small day schools. These institutions, they argued, limited operational expenses and allowed the missionaries to focus on their religious duties.

But Isaac McCoy and Johnston Lykins thought boarding schools were more effective civilizing instruments. The most vociferous supporter of boarding and manual labor schools was Francis Barker. A Massachusetts native, Barker taught at the Western Missouri Institute in Westport and occasionally helped with various missionary duties. Finally, in 1839, the Boston Board formalized Barker’s missionary status.<sup>36</sup>

To satisfy Shawnee demands and to counter the Methodists’ growing influence, Barker began a board-

34. Quote in Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report, 1840*, NCR Microcard editions, 243. See also *ibid.*, *Annual Report, 1841*, 240–41.

35. Henry Harvey to Joseph Ridgeway, February 22, 1842, Letters Received, M234, roll 780; Johnston Lykins to Isaac McCoy, February 15, 1841, McCoy Collection.

36. McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 489–90; John G. Pratt to Lucius Bolles, August 21, 1841, ABFMS; Schultz, *An Indian Canaan*, 155–56; John G. Pratt to “My Dear Sir,” February 19, 1839, ABFMS; W.A. Seward Sharp, *History of Kansas Baptists* (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Seminary Press, 1940), 37–38; Warren, “The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees,” 159.

ing school shortly after his arrival. Some of his Baptist brethren, however, felt Barker's school created too many problems. Pratt, for example, believed the Shawnee Baptist school confirmed his already dismal opinion of boarding schools. "All that I have ever expected from Boarding schools I see developed in the school at shawanoë," he declared, "idleness, ingratitude, heedlessness, and all the evils that might be expected from congregating such little nonconformists."<sup>37</sup> Even McCoy criticized Barker.

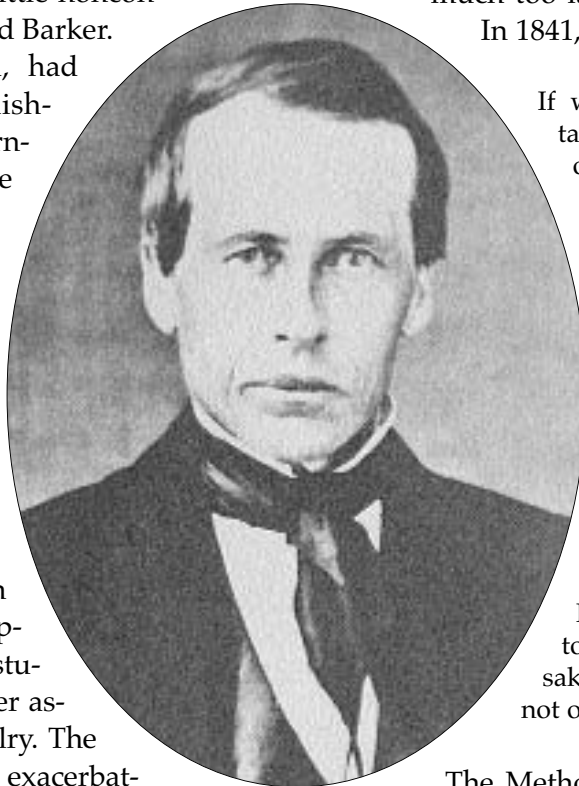
The Methodists, McCoy noted, had formed an "overgrown establishment" that he believed the government and the Indians would "ere long disapprove." Barker, he added, "has, on a small scale, imitated the Methodists so as to subject us to similar blame."<sup>38</sup> McCoy's fears proved groundless. The Baptists lacked the resources afforded the Methodists, and the Baptist school never seriously rivaled the Shawnee Manual Labor School.

The presence of the mammoth Methodist school not only sharpened the competition for Indian students, but it also heightened other aspects of the denominational rivalry. The school's popularity, for example, exacerbated already tense personal relations, sparking feelings of anger and jealousy. While the Shawnee Manual Labor School was under construction, John G. Pratt angrily recounted how the Methodists tried to "overthrow" the Baptist station. Pratt feared that the huge Methodist institution would completely overshadow the modest Baptist school. In addition, Pratt claimed that the Methodists treated Baptist members so rudely that they left the Shawnee tribe for another "to be relieved from their intrusions." Lastly, Pratt charged

that the Methodists took steps to deprive the Baptists of the services of Shawnee interpreters. The Methodists met with one interpreter and told him "revolting tales of Baptists and their peculiar tenets," and if he would give his hand to the Methodists, they "would take him to heaven!"<sup>39</sup>

The war of words increased in the 1840s. The Baptists commonly charged that the Methodists were much too lax in admitting Indian converts.

In 1841, for example, Pratt lamented:



If we were to pursue the course taken by our Methodist neighbor our numbers would soon be swelled from few to many. All the evidence of piety required by them of a change of heart

*Baptist missionary Francis Barker*

in their members is to have the candidate extend their hand in token of friendship and as expressing a desire to join them; whereupon they are duly initiated members of the Methodist Church. Accessions to our number, merely for the sake of increasing in members, is not our desire.<sup>40</sup>

The Methodists, in turn, accused the Baptists of stealing converts. Bishop Andrew Monroe admonished the Baptists for depending "upon the mean practice of proselyting the members of other Churches to sustain themselves in the mission field." Monroe insisted the Baptists expended more effort in making converts from Methodism than from paganism. In the process they did more harm than good because they unsettled new followers and "put the most powerful argument into the mouth of the heathen

37. John G. Pratt to Lucius Bolles, May 10, 1841, ABFMS.

38. Isaac McCoy to Lucius Bolles, August 5, 1841, McCoy Collection.

39. John G. Pratt to "My Dear Sir," February 19, 1839, ABFMS.

40. John G. Pratt to Lucius Bolles, March 9, 1841, *ibid.*

which they have ever been able to use: that is, that these Christians disagree amongst themselves."<sup>41</sup>

**T**he doctrinal disputes came to a head in 1842. On March 12 the Indian Mission District of the Missouri Conference sent a communication to the Baptist missionaries denouncing them for "repeated attempts to alienate, and render dissatisfied members of our Church" and for receiving and baptizing individuals censured by the Methodists for drunkenness, lying, and stealing. The Methodists believed the Baptists' conduct was "unfriendly and calculated to encourage sinful habits in thoughtless persons, and thereby lower the standard of Christianity among a people who should possess the most exalted views of it." The Methodists resolved not to accept members from other denominations without a certificate of good standing and urged the Baptists to adopt a course that would promote "harmony and Christian respect." Because the problem was of "such magnitude," the Methodists threatened to lay the matter before government officials unless the Baptists gave assurances "of a less hostile course."<sup>42</sup>

The Baptists assembled and appointed John G. Pratt to reply to the Methodists' indictment. In April Pratt sent a sarcastic communication stating that the Methodists' character was such "as to render it improper for [the Baptists] to respond." The Methodists, Pratt claimed, had already tried and condemned the Baptists. Therefore, the Baptists did not feel the need to change after the fact. Pratt was surprised that the Methodists demanded redress, because the Baptists, "until now . . . did not know we were amenable to the authorities of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Moreover, the evils about which

the Methodists complained were tenets of the Baptist Church, beyond the control of individual missionaries. The Baptists, Pratt insisted, earnestly desired to promote peace and Christian friendship and would not "wilfully wound the feelings of our brethren, unless it be considered that the carrying out of our religious principles" manifested a lack of respect or lowered the standards of Christianity. In which case, it "would not consistently be expected of us to yield points which seem right and proper, though they might not be approved by those differing from us in their views of religious truth and practice." Pratt added a postscript informing the Methodists that if they specified which charges applied to the Baptist Church and which to individual missionaries, the Baptists would attend to the matter promptly.<sup>43</sup>

Evidently, the Methodists let the matter pass, perhaps because they believed that the Baptists themselves would ruin their own missionary efforts. Fact supported this belief. The Baptist missionaries in this region were a fractious group. They bickered among themselves nearly as often as with their Methodist rivals. For example, two factions struggled to control the Baptist Indian missions. Isaac McCoy and Johnston Lykins directed one group, while Jotham Meeker, John G. Pratt, Ira Blanchard, and Francis Barker composed the other. The roots of the controversy reached far back into Isaac McCoy's missionary career. McCoy had long believed the Baptist Mission Board in Boston lacked the proper zeal for the Indian mission cause. The alienation eventually ended McCoy's affiliation with the Boston board and resulted in his establishment of a rival missionary society in 1842. Even though his official connection with the board had ended, McCoy tried to direct the various Baptist Indian missions from his home in nearby Westport. Meeker, Pratt, Blanchard, and Barker, however, resented McCoy's domineering attitude and remained loyal to the Boston board. The hostility increased further when the "loyalists" tried to establish

41. Andrew Monroe to Brother Elliott, June 10, 1842, *Western Christian Advocate*, August 5, 1842, 61.

42. Methodist Missionaries to Baptist Missionaries, March 12, 1842, John G. Pratt Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society; Minutes of First Quarterly Conference for Indian Mission District, Missouri Conference, March 12, 1842, "Recording Steward's Book for Indian Mission District," 8, box 7, Indians History Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society; Delilah Lykins to Johnston Lykins, March 21, 1842, McCoy Collection.

43. John G. Pratt to Missionaries of Methodist Episcopal Church, April 22, 1842, Pratt Collection.

a separate congregation among the Delawares without McCoy's sanction.<sup>44</sup>

The conflict nearly destroyed any gains the Baptists had made among tribes along the Missouri border. In 1843 seven Shawnee members withdrew from the loyalists; the boarding school had to be suspended, and nearly all preaching among the Indians halted. David Lykins, one of the McCoy faction, commented that "we have had almost a war among the Shawnees." He noted that Francis Barker had tried to sway the Shawnees to his side, but he "was met at every point, and has been completely foiled!!!!" Johnston Lykins further accused the other group of accepting and baptizing Indians who were wholly unfit for church membership.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the loyalists charged that McCoy and Lykins tried to control all the missionaries even though they themselves rarely worked among the Indians. Instead, they lived in comfort in Westport and spent more time on business matters or improving their farms. These circumstances caused many white settlers to suspect the missionaries of personal aggrandizement. Moreover, Pratt claimed that McCoy had poisoned the Baptists' relationship with Indian Agent Richard Cummins. He learned from Cummins that McCoy had for some time tried to take over Cummins's position as agent. Pratt felt certain that "much if not all the misunderstanding

there has been between the Agent, the Methodist Missionaries and us has had its origins from this fruitful source of difficulty." McCoy's ambition, Pratt concluded, was a "real injury to our cause."<sup>46</sup>

The discord undoubtedly undermined the Baptists' credibility in the eyes of their Indian charges. No doubt Native Americans were confused by interdenominational strife, but they must have been completely bewildered when members of the

same faith cast aspersions upon their missionary brethren. As a result, the controversy augmented Shawnee factionalism as missionaries encouraged tribal members to take sides. Rumors circulated that a number of chiefs planned to



*Shawnee Chief Black Hoof*

drive the Barker-Pratt-Meeker group out of Indian Territory.<sup>47</sup> The rumors had some basis in fact. Captain Blackfeather, a Shawnee chief, wrote to Isaac McCoy in April 1843 informing him that the Shawnees "kept away from . . . those men whom you left. They were proved to be bad men and they are getting worse, and all the Shawnees know them to be so." Blackfeather pointedly asked McCoy if he should drive the other faction out. He noted that he would have plenty of help because "All the chiefs know them now." On several occasions Barker and Pratt were ordered to leave "on peril of their lives." Nothing came of the threats, however. In a move that epitomized the confusion bred by the Baptists' internecine feud, Blackfeather advised Johnston Lykins in January 1844 that "we give ourselves back to the Mission of the Boston

44. McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 459–60, 490; Schultz, *An Indian Canaan*, 82, 162–64, 197–202; Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 212–25; Jack W. Manning, "John Gill Pratt: Missionary Printer, Physician, Teacher and Statesman" (Th.D. dissertation, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1951), 19–42, 44–50; Robert E. Starburg, "Baptists on the Kansas Frontier" (B.D. thesis, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 93–104.

45. "Annual Report-Shawano Mission," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 23 (June 1843): 139; David Lykins to Johnston Lykins, February 8 [1843], McCoy Collection; Johnston Lykins to Lucius Bolles, February 24, 1843, *ibid.*

46. John G. Pratt to Solomon Peck, July 8, 1842, ABFMS; see also Pratt to Peck, January 15, 1841, Pratt Collection; Francis Barker et al. to Lucius Bolles, March 7, 1842, ABFMS.

47. Francis Barker to Jotham Meeker, March 21, 1843, Meeker Collection.

B[oar]d.”<sup>48</sup> The confusion and ill will lingered for several years.

Throughout the 1840s the Baptists lamented the debilitating effect the controversy had on their mission work, but their greatest concern was that the Methodists would gain the upper hand in the contest for Indian souls. In December 1841 at the height of the controversy, John G. Pratt worried that a neighboring tribe might abandon the Baptists and live with no church at all. As bad as that would be, Pratt most feared that “numbers will identify themselves with the Methodists by whom we are surrounded, and who are eagle eyed watching opportunities to invade our feeble ranks.”

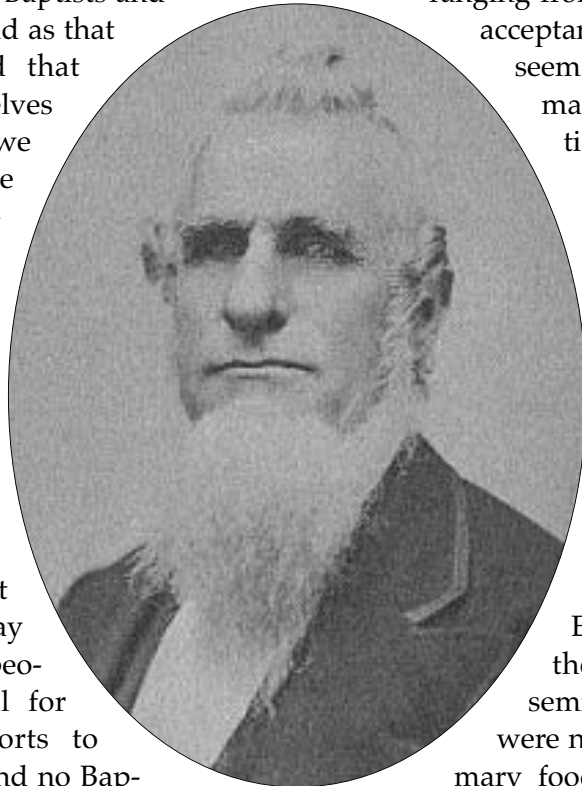
*Methodist missionary Jerome Berryman*

Nothing would be more gratifying to the Methodists, he charged, than to “clear that neighborhood of all Baptist influence.” If it became known that “disaffection has found its way into our little band among that people,” it would be the “signal for prompt and persevering efforts to Methodize the whole region. And no Baptist will ever consent to vie with them in underhanded measures to accomplish their object.”<sup>49</sup>

Given the intense nature of the rivalry among the Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers, it seems as if these groups expended more energy verbally attack-

ing each other than helping the group they professed to save—the Shawnees. Indeed, the tribe is almost lost amidst the turmoil. Tribal members, however, were not passive victims of this battle. They made conscious decisions regarding “civilizing” efforts and, to a limited extent, controlled the missionaries to suit individual and tribal needs. To be sure, a wide variety of responses was voiced within the tribe, ranging from outright rejection to wholesale acceptance of American culture. But it seems clear that unadulterated pragmatism was the underlying motivation for many of these decisions.

The Shawnees belonged to the Algonquian language group and were one of the most migratory tribes in North America, with villages scattered across much of the eastern United States. But by the early nineteenth century the majority of the tribe congregated in Ohio and Missouri. The Shawnees’ traditional subsistence pattern paralleled that of most Eastern Woodland tribes. During the summer the tribe occupied semi-permanent villages. The men were not only warriors but also the primary food providers. They hunted deer, buffalo, and turkey and also fished. Shawnee women performed a myriad of duties: rearing children, preparing skins to make clothing, maintaining the camp, and tending fields. Corn, beans, squash, and pumpkins were the primary crops, but the women also gathered berries, roots, and wild plants to supplement their diet. In the fall the Shawnees left their main village and broke into smaller family bands. At these camps the men left on extended hunts and to trap, while the women, in addition to regular tasks, devoted much time to making maple sugar.<sup>50</sup>



48. Captain Blackfeather to Isaac McCoy, April 20, 1843, McCoy Collection; Blackfeather and Cesiki to Johnston Lykins, January 10, 1844, *ibid.*; “Annual Report—Shawnee Mission,” 139.

49. John G. Pratt to Lucius Bolles, December 3, 1841, ABFMS; Pratt to Bolles, December 3, 1841, Pratt Collection. Another incident occurred in 1848 when the Boston board dismissed Ira Blanchard as missionary to the Delawares because of a sex scandal. Jotham Meeker noted with disgust that immediately after Blanchard’s departure a Methodist missionary visited several prominent members in the Delaware Baptist Church and “openly proposed that they should unite with the [Methodists] saying at the same that they could see by B[lanchard]’s conduct what Baptist Missionaries were.” See Meeker to Solomon Peck, February 1, 1848, Meeker Collection; Joy, “‘Into the Wilderness,’” 230–31.

50. Jerry E. Clark, *The Shawnee* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), 3–25, 31, 38–41, 45–46; James H. Howard, *Shawnee! The Ceremonialism of a Native Indian Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 1–19, 43–44, 48–58, 103–4.

Until the end of the eighteenth century this paradigm remained largely intact as the Shawnees bitterly defended their lands and traditional culture against British and American expansion. Despite this hostility, contact with the whites had already wrought deep-seated changes within Shawnee culture. Since the seventeenth century the Shawnees had traded with Europeans. Although the tribe tenaciously clung to the most important aspects of its society, the Shawnees eagerly sought the advantages derived from European technology. Metal pots displaced pottery because they were much more durable. Guns superseded bows and arrows because they gave the Shawnees a technical superiority over their enemies and made them more efficient hunters. Incorporating white goods into their traditional culture increased the Shawnees' dependence on white society, but they consciously did so because guns and metal pots offered obvious benefits.<sup>51</sup>

The pace of change quickened for the Shawnees, especially after Anthony Wayne's troops routed a multiracial force at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. Thereafter, Chief Black Hoof and his band sought an accommodation with the Americans. The aging chief believed his people's survival would be assured only if they lived like whites. Black Hoof asked government officials to send agricultural implements and livestock to his band. In 1807 the government authorized William Kirk, a Quaker missionary, to work among the Ohio Shawnee. Under Kirk's guidance, Black Hoof's band began to farm individual plots, raise livestock, and build log houses.<sup>52</sup>

The majority of the tribe rejected the Friends' overtures to become civilized. But traditional Shawnee society failed to cope with the onslaught of alcohol, diseases, and American expansion. Some of the Shawnees sank further into drunken despair. Others violently vented their frustration against each other. But the chaos also sparked the short-lived revitalization movement of Tenkwatawa and his brother Tecumseh. Their dream of a native paradise, free

from American interference, essentially died with Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1813.<sup>53</sup>

Once the Shawnees were firmly under American authority, the Quakers resumed their missionary labors. They established a school and continued to impress the advantages of civilized life upon the Shawnees. Increasing numbers of Shawnees became convinced that their traditional lifestyle would have to give way in the face of an aggressive American culture. Thus, they wanted schools that would teach their children the skills—farming, blacksmithing, or carpentry—necessary to thrive in a radically new environment.<sup>54</sup>

Increasing numbers of Shawnees employed this utilitarian approach toward acculturation after they had been removed to Indian Territory; however, a portion of the tribe doggedly continued its semi-nomadic subsistence. In 1835 Thomas Johnson complained that the fall was "always the most gloomy season of the year in an Indian country, for the Indians generally go hunting in September, and do not return until about Christmas." In 1837 Jerome Berryman noted that some of the Shawnees were "yet rambling from place to place, in pursuit of a bare subsistence in any way they can obtain it."<sup>55</sup> But, as Berryman indicated, hunting was becoming a less viable means of subsistence. With several tribes crowded into Indian Territory and a rapidly depleting supply of wild game, more Shawnees realized that, for the tribe to survive, they and their children would have to learn new skills. Chief John Perry forcefully stated this idea in 1837 as he told a Quaker delegation, "When we lived in Ohio, where we could get game, I thought not worth while to send my children to school, and I sent none; but now we live where we cannot get game, I want my children to go to school, and learn to work too."<sup>56</sup>

53. An excellent account of the Shawnee revitalization movement and the roles of Tenkwatawa and Tecumseh is Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*.

54. *Ibid.*, 8–19.

55. Johnson to Corresponding Secretary, December 17, 1835, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, February 5, 1836, 94; J.C. Berryman to C. Elliott and L.L. Hamline, September 4, 1837, *Western Christian Advocate*, October 6, 1837, 93; Clark, *The Shawnee*, 57.

56. 1837 Meeting Minutes, 13; John W. Ragsdale Jr., "The Dispossession of the Kansas Shawnee," *UMKC Law Review* 58 (Winter 1990): 226.

51. Clark, *The Shawnee*, 42, 55–56, 58.

52. R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 8–19; Clark, *The Shawnee*, 24, 46–47, 88.



Other considerations also compelled Shawnee chiefs to support civilizing efforts. As noted earlier, it was the leaders of a Missouri band who first sought the benefits of a “civilized” education. Several reasons may have prompted this move. Perhaps the Shawnees did so to curry favor with government agents and white missionaries. This helped forge links with potentially powerful allies and allowed the chiefs to cement their own positions of authority within the tribe.<sup>57</sup> Ironically, some Shawnees supported white education because it would help perpetuate tribal society. Among these was Chief Blackhoof, son of the aforementioned Black Hoof. According to Methodist missionary Lorenzo Waugh, Blackhoof asserted at a tribal council that education “was a trouble brought on them by the savage encroachment of the white faces” and contradicted “the original wise arrangement of the Great Spirit, which allowed their children to grow up free, like the young deer and elk of the forest.” The only reason the Shawnees should tolerate white schools, he claimed, was to allow their children “to learn the cunning of the white faces, and thus be able to compete successfully with them.”<sup>58</sup> Blackhoof did not see education as an arena for change. Rather, he viewed it as a means to counter white influence and safeguard traditional Shawnee culture.

Another important factor helps explain the Shawnees’ patronage of manual labor schools. The Shawnees had been in contact with whites for many years. During that time whites either married into or were adopted by the tribe. Consequently, the Shawnees included an increasing number of mixed-blood offspring. By 1850 Quaker missionary Wilson Hobbs noted that few full-bloods were in the tribe as “two hundred years of contact with border whites had done much to change their blood.”<sup>59</sup> In addition,

several mixed-bloods rose to prominent positions within the tribe. Joseph Parks, Charles Bluejacket, and Paschal Fish were among the Shawnees’ most influential members. Because mixed-blood members were a product of white and Indian cultures, they were more amenable to acculturating into white society. Acting as cultural brokers or innovators, Parks, Bluejacket, and other mixed-bloods used their influence to sustain the mission schools.<sup>60</sup>

Once the Shawnees, mixed- and full-bloods, embraced the necessity of learning American-style agriculture, they made rapid advances as farmers. In 1848 longtime agent Richard Cummins praised the Shawnees. “Of all the tribes on the border,” he wrote, “the Shawnees have made the greatest progress, and some of their farms will compare with many of the best within the state line; and in very many instances, they are superior, both as regards management and culture.” Missionaries from all three denominations agreed with Cummins’s assessment.<sup>61</sup> Their sentiments were not illusory. Chief Blackhoof told a Quaker delegation in 1846 that “every man has his Farm and [is] trying to make them larger every year, and add to them stock of Horses, Cattle, Sheep, and Hogs, to build good houses, and to live like white people.”<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, the Shawnees accepted white education for various reasons. Certainly the tribe did not enjoy the freedom to maneuver as it once did. Those who implemented federal Indian policy had the upper hand in terms of raw political power, but the Shawnees exerted enough influence to satisfy their particular needs at that time. For example, the Shawnees expressed their partiality for the Baptists’ “new system” of education because it made a difficult

57. This was a common practice among the tribes situated along the lower Missouri River. See Tanis C. Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996).

58. Lorenzo Waugh, *Autobiography of Lorenzo Waugh*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Methodist Book Concern, 1896), 121; Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 65–66.

59. Hobbs, “The Friends’ Establishment in Kansas Territory,” 253.

60. Anthropologist Ralph Linton noted that the successful adoption of new things by a culture depended upon the prestige of the “innovators.” That is why missionaries always tried to influence tribal chiefs first. See Linton, “Acculturation and the Processes of Culture Change,” in *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (New York: D. Appleton–Century Company Incorporated, 1940), 470–74.

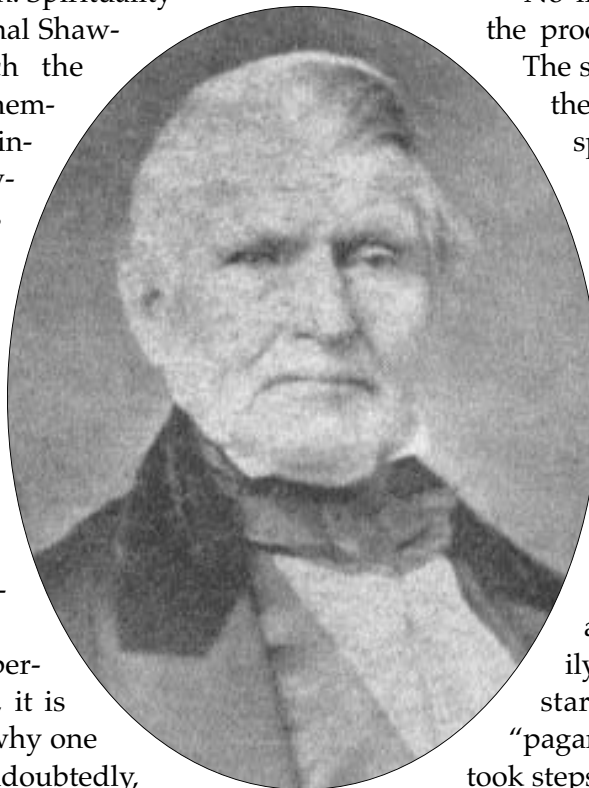
61. Richard Cummins to Thomas Harvey, September 26, 1848, Letters Received, M234, roll 302; Miriam Hough to Daniel Huff, March 19, 1846, Huff Family Papers; Francis Barker to Solomon Peck, October 2, 1851, Francis Barker Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society; Thomas Johnson to Orlando Brown, October 13, 1849, Letters Received, M234, roll 784.

62. 1837 Meeting Minutes, 14.

transition easier. In the process the tribe compelled the Methodists to adopt the Baptists' plan. In yet another case the Shawnees' preference for a manual arts education forced the Baptists to abandon their day school and establish a manual labor institution.

The same pragmatism that guided Shawnees responses with regard to education also shaped their attitudes toward yet another facet of the missionaries' "civilizing" efforts—religion. Spirituality was an integral part of traditional Shawnee society, one from which the Shawnees could not divorce themselves easily. All of nature was infused with a pantheon of Shawnee deities, and the tribe's religious ceremonies appealed to various gods to ensure productive harvests and hunts and to ward off diseases or evil spirits. Because every facet of Indian life affected the spirit world, only a compelling reason could sway an individual essentially to deny his or her very "Indianness" and accept Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

Conversion is an intensely personal experience; consequently, it is difficult to know truly how or why one goes through the process. Undoubtedly, some Shawnees sincerely embraced Christianity. Others may have converted because they believed Christianity would enable them to make sense of the drastic cultural changes they faced. The inability of the Shawnees and other tribes to halt the steady American advance may have convinced the Shawnees that the Christian God was more powerful than their own deities. If God could bestow such blessings upon the whites, perhaps he could do the same for them.



Shawnee tribesman Joseph Parks

Still others may have converted to advance their personal interests. Government agents and missionaries certainly would have favored chiefs or headmen who accepted Christianity over those who adhered to their traditional religion. Others converted for less self-serving reasons. Most of the tribe had adopted facets of civilization and for some, especially the mixed-bloods, religion was simply another aspect.<sup>64</sup>

No matter the reason for conversion, the process did not come without cost. The struggle between Christianity and the Shawnees' traditional religion sparked dissension and fragmentation within the tribe. Christian and "pagan" factions emerged in the 1830s when missionaries

began working among the Shawnees. The traditionalists were much aggrieved that many of the Fish band joined the Methodist Church and had abandoned the Great Spirit so easily, especially when recent converts started proselytizing among their "pagan" brethren.<sup>65</sup> The traditionalists took steps to forestall further desertions.

In 1837 Thomas Johnson related how the traditionalists "persecuted" a chief who had converted. They expelled him from the Shawnee council and offered to reinstate him only if he renounced Christianity. The chief refused, but not everyone successfully withstood the traditionalists' pressure. On another occasion the Ohio Shawnees, who still adhered to the old religion, offered to share their annuities with other "pagan" bands or with Christians who would return to the old customs. Johnson sadly reported

63. Charles Callender, "Shawnee," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 628–29; Howard, *Shawnee!*, 162–64, 173–82; Clark, *The Shawnee*, 48–49.

64. Robert Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787–1862* (1965; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1972), 112–13, 121.

65. Jesse Greene to Missouri Conference Missionary Society, September 19, 1836, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, December 9, 1836, 62.

two or three Christian bands did not have “firmness enough to resist the temptation” and accepted the bribe. Despite this setback, Johnson was thankful because “most of the Christian Shawnees gave evidence that the grace of God was sufficient for them in this time of trial,” and they refused the money.<sup>66</sup>

Several years later Francis Barker was invited to preach at a Shawnee funeral. Most of the Indians who attended numbered among those who held fast to their ancient religion. Barker, however, was pleased that many seemed to pay close attention to his exhortations. But one, a son of Tenkwatawa, took it upon himself to hinder Barker’s efforts. “With surprising agility,” the

*Shawnee tribesman Charles Bluejacket*

Prophet’s son stepped from one Shawnee to another and spoke to them, his “tall figure shooting backward and forward, as the light of the fires mingled with the surrounding darkness.” Several times, the Shawnee shot “piercing” glances at Barker, “indicating, as it would seem, that he had found himself behind the times in preventing [Barker from] speaking that night.”<sup>67</sup>

The religious struggle also tore families apart. Johnson recounted that a Shawnee woman came to a camp meeting in August 1841 looking for her daughter,

66. Thomas Johnson to Corresponding Secretary, January 17, 1837, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, March 17, 1837; Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, 118–20. Lorenzo Waugh also related an account in which the anti-Christian faction, led by Chief Blackhoof, withheld annuities from the Christian party. According to Waugh, the Christian Shawnees were convinced that they were happier without the money. This so impressed Blackhoof that he persuaded the other anti-Christian chiefs to pay over the Christians’ share of the annuity. See Waugh, *Autobiography of Lorenzo Waugh*, 120–23.

67. “Extracts from the Journal of Rev. F. Barker,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 24 (April 1844): 81–82.

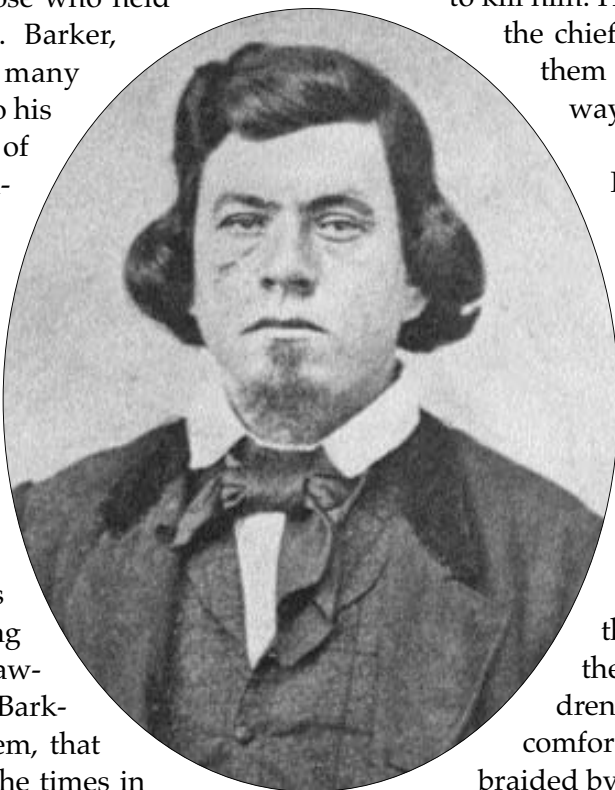
only to find that she had joined the Methodists. Enraged, the woman began beating her daughter and “continued to whip her across the camp ground.” Fortunately for the daughter, “God took hold of [her mother’s] heart,” and she eventually joined her daughter in the Methodist society. At this same camp meeting a Shawnee chief accepted Christianity. But when he returned home his wife and son threatened to kill him. His son waved a tomahawk over the chief’s head, “but the old man told them that he had started in a good way, and he intended to go on.”<sup>68</sup>

The antagonism continued. In 1843 Edward T. Peery of the Methodist mission remarked that the “line between Christianity and Paganism [was] more distinctly marked, causing the two parties to view each other at a greater distance.” Both parties, he mused, used to meet and mingle “their sympathies upon the common ground of poverty, misery and crime.” But now the Christian faction extended their farms, educated their children, and improved their domestic comforts. All the while they were “upbraided by the others as shamefully yielding up their national identity and conforming to the customs of the white man.”<sup>69</sup>

Clearly, the missionaries’ efforts caused rifts within the tribe; nevertheless, the majority of the Shawnees rejected conversion and did not yield up their national identity. The Methodists struggled in vain to eradicate what they saw as the very core of Shawnee heathenism. Jerome Berryman complained in 1837 that although the Methodist mission was in a prosperous state, “a large portion of this nation are

68. Thomas Johnson to E.R. Ames, August 28, 1841, *Western Christian Advocate*, December 31, 1841, 146.

69. Edward T. Peery to E.R. Ames, January 8, 1843, *ibid.*, February 17, 1843, 174.



opposed to missions." A number of hostile chiefs, Berryman wrote, told the agent that "the missionaries could do [them] no good; that they had better go and teach some of the wild tribes, perhaps they might help them some." The Methodists did make some inroads, but they never achieved a wholesale transformation of the Shawnees. In an 1846 census Richard Cummins estimated that three-fourths of the tribe still adhered to its "National or ancient Religion." Two years later Bishop James Andrew felt the "progress of the gospel for some years past has been exceedingly slow." Indeed, he questioned "whether, for the last four or five years there has been any apparent increase. The most of the old members continue firm, and there are every year conversions and additions to the church; but it is likely we have done little more than hold our own."<sup>70</sup>

The other denominations also failed to vanquish the Shawnees' religion. In 1845 Eliza Fuller painted a discouraging picture of the state of the Baptist Church among the Shawnees. The Indians, even those professing Christianity, she bemoaned, were prone to "frequent habits of intoxication, profanity &c." They seldom attended Sabbath meetings, "accidentally" dropping in to the number of eight, five, three, two or sometimes none. The only services that the Shawnees enthusiastically attended were large two-day meetings. The reason for the Indians' sudden piety, Fuller wrote, was that the Baptists supplied plenty of food. Once the meeting concluded, "no religious interest is manifest but the poor indian unsanctified by grace returns again to his sinful habits." Henry Harvey of the Friends' mission likewise questioned the validity of those Shawnees who converted. Many Christian Indians appeared "to be very zealous observers of the forms and ceremonies of religion," but they, "like too many of their white brethren, appear[ed] to have the form of godliness but not the power."<sup>71</sup>

70. Jerome Berryman to C. Elliott and L.L. Hamline, September 4, 1837, *ibid.*, October 6, 1837, 93; "Census and Statistics of the Shawnee Tribe of Indians," Letters Received, M234, roll 302; James O. Andrew, *Miscellanies: Comprising Letters, Essays, and Addresses* (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F.A. Owen, 1855), 164.

71. Eliza Fuller accused the ministers at the Shawnee Baptist Station of misleading visitors. She believed they scheduled two-day meetings to give visitors the impression that the Baptist Church had a large Shawnee

By 1844 the religious situation among the Shawnees was confused at best. The three Christian denominations working among the tribe bred much friction between "traditionalists" and newly won converts. The interdenominational bickering only exacerbated the religious disarray for the tribe. It is remarkable that, despite the turmoil and the difficulties confronting them, the Shawnees exercised a surprising degree of control over their own immediate fate as well as the operations of the competing missionaries. Tribal members pragmatically accepted those elements of American culture that assured tangible benefits and rejected those that compromised their cultural identity.

The year 1844 marked a turning point in this religious struggle. In that year the slavery issue split the Methodist Episcopal Church into Northern and Southern factions; the Methodist missionaries working in Indian Territory threw their allegiance to the Methodist Church, South. Although slaves may have been present at the Methodist mission as early as 1830, slavery did not seem to be a source of friction. Plenty of other points of contention existed among the three denominations. The long-standing rivalry continued unabated. But, after 1844, the divisiveness stemming from slavery increasingly infiltrated Indian Territory and further complicated relations between the missionaries and the Shawnees. While Shawnee and missionary alike wrestled with this dilemma, another quandary erupted. American expansion had rolled to the territory's eastern edge and would soon vault beyond to the West Coast. Once American settlers saw the bountiful land that the Shawnees and the other tribes along the Missouri border inhabited, they demanded that Indian Territory be opened to white settlement. The combination of slavery and white expansion wreaked havoc in the Shawnee reserve and eventually turned this holy battleground into the actual battleground of Bleeding Kansas.

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following. See Fuller to Solomon Peck, October 17, 1845, ABFMS; Fuller to Christiana McCoy, October 17, 1845, McCoy Collection; Francis Barker to Solomon Peck, January 12, 1850, ABFMS; Henry Harvey, *History of the Shawnee Indians, From the Year 1681 to 1854, Inclusive* (1855; reprint, Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint Co., 1977), 270.